

EPA Region 5 – *Partners for Asthma Action* Recognition 2007

Southwest Michigan Asthma Coalition (SMAC)

Background: Community asthma education had been previously provided by Lakeland as a community outreach program, but the Asthma Initiative of Michigan/MDCH coalition structure and grant funding supported an expanded collaborative effort. The Berrien County Health Dept epidemiologist alerted Lakeland to the grant opportunity in January 2003. Given the prevalence of asthma in the Benton Harbor and Niles/Buchanan areas, the need was already apparent. What was discovered is the increasing number of children with asthma throughout the three county region regardless of socio-economic background.

Partners: Lakeland HealthCare; Berrien County Health Dept; Benton Harbor Area School District: School Nurses; Berrien County Intermediate School District; area physicians; pharmaceutical representatives (GlaxoSmithKline, Novartis)

Goals: (1) Two members achieving Asthma Educator Certified status (at present, we have one); (2) An Asthma Action Plan in the school for 50% of children with asthma; (3) Presentations at 50% of schools within our coalition area; and, (4) Support the establishment of an asthma care management program modeled on the Asthma Network of Western Michigan or in collaboration with an existing health clinic. (5) Work with coaches in addition to the school staff.

Challenges: (1) Scheduling presentations for school/coaching staff, given their limited free time; (2) Recruiting and maintaining community members; and, (3) Recruiting and preparing educators to respond to school program needs.

Key Drivers and Program Areas: (1) **Committed leaders and champions** - - Lakeland HealthCare has been the fiduciary agent for SMAC since the beginning in 2003. Directed by senior management, the manager of the Community Health Enhancement Department has generously provided both financial and in-kind support to supplement the annual grant funding. Without the cooperation and creative support of the Lakeland Marketing and the Lakeland Graphics Departments, two most recent projects would not have been developed: a mailing to 10,000 families in Berrien County promoting asthma awareness and education, listing of coalition activities in the quarterly *Health Currents* magazine, and an article in *Physician's Advantage* November 2006 issue for southwest Michigan promoting Lakeland's partnership with the coalition. A large challenge was to learn how to effectively promote our programs and to leverage the creative opportunities at hand to reach the community. Fortunately, SMAC is part of an organization that has both the means and the will to do so. The coalition has seventeen members and a core group of ten active members who regularly attend meetings. Four members serve as educators for community and school presentations. (2) **Community Ties** - From the start SMAC has had representation from area stakeholders. Lakeland HealthCare, the major health system in Berrien County employs the coordinator, an RN staff educator in Community Outreach. In addition two other members are in-hospital patient educators (an RRT/AEC and a CNS – OB/Peds), who regularly respond to community and school needs for one on one education as part of their primary jobs. The Berrien County Health Department and Lakeland worked together to organize the coalition and establish it as a primary asthma education resource, responding to an assessed community need. The BCHD is located in Benton Harbor, where the prevalence of asthma is high and disparity issues abound. Given the focus on children and school staff, representatives of the School Nurse Network of Berrien/Cass Counties were a necessary element. The Benton Harbor Area Schools has a high prevalence of children with asthma and two nurses from that district are members. They keep us in touch with the needs of school staff and opportunities to provide staff presentations and Open Airways for Schools programs. Several members represent pharmaceutical companies. They work in the service area and are acutely aware of local needs and the level of care being provided. Through a connection made by our GlaxoSmithKline member, SMAC has recently been asked to share educational material with a group in a county to the north that intends to establish a coalition. A continuing challenge has been to attract and retain a community representative. This year a former nurse who has several grandchildren with asthma has joined SMAC as our grandparent champion. We have had the continued support of two physician champions, a pediatrician and an allergist. **Collaborations:** Last year the Asthma Initiative of Michigan, in collaboration with coalition members around the state, developed F.L.A.R.E., a comprehensive and concise tool to help patients receive discharge instructions based on the NAEPP Guidelines for asthma management. A SMAC member facilitated its adoption by the Lakeland Emergency Departments.

- Follow up with your doctor
- Learn your medications
- Asthma is a chronic disease
- Respond to warning signs
- Emergency Care

To facilitate the distribution of the “Never Judge a Book by Its Cover” asthma information packets (developed by the Asthma Initiative of Michigan and the Michigan Public Health Institute) to school buildings across the state, SMAC worked with the Berrien County Intermediate School District to propose using the already existing statewide REMC system to streamline delivery and reduce postage costs. Because of the efforts of the Health Dept. epidemiologist (a SMAC member), Berrien County schools can now enter the diagnosis of asthma on the electronic record and better track their students with the disease. Through its membership in the Berrien County Tobacco Reduction Coalition, a Health Department based coalition, SMAC supports the countywide effort to reduce the effects of second-hand smoke. SMAC has developed a strong working relationship with the Berrien County Intermediate School District, and is its resource for presenting asthma education to teaching and coaching staff. SMAC has also developed a strong working relationship with the local radio station and a morning talk show host, providing valuable access to airtime. As part of the back to school 2006 promotion, educators discussed the value and details of the Asthma Action Plan for effective management. **Integrated Health Care Services:** SMAC members participated in the distribution of the Michigan Asthma Resource Kit (MARK) to area providers in conjunction with short educational presentations to office staff. Lakeland Medical Education for Physicians has responded to SMAC requests by scheduling asthma experts to address physicians at Continuing Medical Education lunch programs on several occasions. As a patient educator one of our members serves on a number of hospital committees, one of which was charged with improving discharge procedures for patients with diabetes. A long advocate of the Asthma Action Plan, she suggested adapting the form to a diabetes discharge algorithm. Diabetes educators assisted in drafting the form, and it is now in the process of becoming part of the Lakeland discharge procedure. Over the past several years SMAC members, with the support of the physician champion, have suggested that the coalition investigate the possibility of supporting the establishment of a case management program. SMAC is now one of two coalitions in west Michigan being considered by the American Lung Association of Michigan and Health Plan of Michigan as the site for a case management pilot program.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations:

- Need multiple paths to get messages out to audience - Over the years, SMAC has implemented strategies to contact school boards. This year, they were able to pull together a marketing plan to reach out to school administrators (in collaboration with Health Department) and a Berrien County Health & Science Teacher advisor. Besides the Lakeland Quarterly, SMAC issued in newsletter and developed a post card for mailing about awareness - Went out to 10,000 families in counties.
- Teachers are very interested in the resources available – have a lot of things to keep track of, and the information available is quite well received. Did survey of teachers awareness on asthma, and found that most teachers don’t know what needs to be done. SMAC realizes they need to get into teacher educator days and do other trainings.
- Look for other initiatives that are in-line with Coalition’s Work - National Association of Superintendents developed a new initiative last spring, with guidelines focusing on the reduction of the burden of asthma. They are referencing this in the Coalition’s school district information.
- Look for others who have done this before as mentors. Used Asthma Network of West Michigan (ANWM) as a mentor. ANWM freely gave out their information, which saved a lot of time and allowed SMAC to move forward more quickly since they didn’t have to re-invent the wheel.

Contact Information:

Managing Agent: Lakeland HealthCare
Program Location: 1234 Napier Ave., St. Joseph, MI 49085
Program Coverage: Berrien, Cass & Van Buren Counties
Main Point of Contact (POC): Erin Salvagione, RN, BA
POC Phone Number: 269-927-5148
POC E-Mail Address: esalvagione@lakelandregional.org